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WEST MIDLANDS POLICE

FORCE POLICY DOCUMENT

POLICY TITLE:	The management and deployment of Family Liaison Officers
POLICY REFERENCE NO:	FCID/05

Executive Summary

The document outlines individual roles and responsibilities of Family Liaison Officers and offers a structure to facilitate the deployment and effective management of them.

***Any enquiries in relation to this policy should be made directly with that of the policy contact / department shown below.*

Intended Policy Audience

This policy is aimed at all officers involved in any investigation where the circumstances warrant consideration of deployment of a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) and other staff responsible for the welfare of FLOs.

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Evidence Based Research

Full supporting documentation and evidence of consultation in relation to this policy including that of any version changes for implementation and review, are held with the Force Policy Co-ordinator including that of the authorised original Command Team papers.

Please Note.

PRINTED VERSIONS SHOULD NOT BE RELIED UPON. THE MOST UP TO DATE VERSION OF ANY POLICY OR DIRECTIVE CAN BE FOUND ON THE EQUIP DATABASE ON THE INTRANET.

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Force Diversity Vision Statement and Values

“Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations by embedding a culture of equality and respect that puts all of our communities, officers and staff at the heart of everything we do. Working together as one we will strive to make a difference to our service delivery by mainstreaming our organisational values”

“All members of the public and communities we serve, all police officers, special constables and police staff members shall receive equal and fair treatment regardless of, age, disability, sex, race, gender reassignment, religion/belief, sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership and pregnancy/maternity. If you consider this policy could be improved for any of these groups please raise with the author of the policy without delay.”

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ACRONYMS

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
BRAKE	Caring for Victims of Road death/ Criminal Justice System (CJS)
CBT	Cognitive behavioural therapy
CID	Criminal Investigations Department
CMPG	Central Motorway Policing Group
CRUSE	Bereavement Care Charity
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DVI	Disaster Victim Identification
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
EDHR	Equality Diversity Human Rights
EQIA	Equality Impact Assessment
FCC	Force Control Centre
FLC	Family Liaison Coordinator
FCID	Force Criminal Investigations Department
FLO	Family Liaison Officer
FLODEX	Family Liaison Officer Deployment Exit
GHQ	Government Health Questionnaires
HOLMES	Home Office Large Major Enquiry System
ICIDP	Initial Crime Investigators Development Programme
LBGT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender
MIRT	Major Investigation & Review Team
NPIA	National Police Improvement Agency
PACE	Police And Criminal Evidence Act
PIP	Professionalising Investigation Programme
RIPA	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act
SAMM	Support After Murder and Manslaughter
SIO	Senior Investigating Officer
SIM	Senior Identification Manager
SPOC	Single Point Of Contact
STO	Specially Trained Officer
SUDI	Sudden and Unexplained Death of an Infant

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1. Introduction

1.1 Liaison with the family of someone who has died in traumatic circumstances is one of the most demanding of all tasks performed by Police Officers. Families will be considered as partners in an investigation and must be treated appropriately, professionally, with respect and according to their diverse needs.

Where there is a police investigation into the death of a human being, the police have a positive duty to communicate effectively and inclusively with the bereaved family. On most occasions this can be achieved by deploying a FLO.

The significant resource represented by family liaison can be used across a broad spectrum of policing. The guidance set out in this document should be considered in circumstances in which there has been:

- An unexplained or violent death, particularly in respect of:
 - Homicide
 - Road death
 - Mass fatality; and
- Any other 'critical incident' where family liaison might enhance the effectiveness of the police response, for example, a missing person enquiry or an allegation of hate crime.

A critical incident is defined by ACPO as:

'Any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community'.

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2. Aim

2.1 Family Liaison

Family Liaison is first and foremost about investigation. To that aim FLO is placed with families to analyse the needs, concerns and expectation of the 'family'. Additionally they are there in order to identify all the relevant and realistic action that should be taken in the context of their human rights and the obligations that are set out in this document.

Family liaison officers are best placed to work with the family in order to facilitate their right to receive all relevant information connected with the enquiry, subject to the needs of the investigation. This is part of a two way relationship whereby the FLO gathers material from the family that assists the investigation. This must be completed in a way that is proportionate to their fundamental right to privacy and family life.

The main objectives arising from these aims are:

- To gather material from the family in a manner which contributes to the investigation and preserves its integrity
- To provide information to, and facilitate care and support for, the family, who are themselves victims, in a sensitive and compassionate manner in accordance with the needs of the investigation
- To secure the confidence and trust of the family, thereby enhancing their contribution to the investigation

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3. Sources

3.1 The following core documents have been utilised to develop this policy:

- [ACPO NPIA Family Liaison Officer Guidance 2008](#)
- [European Convention on Human Rights](#)
- [McPherson Report](#)
- [Road Death Investigation Manual](#)
- [Murder Investigation Manual](#)

3.2 Useful WMP Websites:

- [Family Liaison Website](#)
- [EDHR Hub of Excellence](#)
- [Coroners Website](#)
- [Roads Policing](#)
- CMPG

3.2 Useful External Websites:

- [ACPO](#)
- [Home Office](#)

4. Roles

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4.1 Family Liaison Officer (FLO)

The primary function of a FLO is that of an investigator. In performing this role the officer will also offer to provide, give and facilitate support to the family to meet their identified needs. Officers will not personally counsel a victims' family whether qualified to do so or not. This does not, however, preclude a FLO from offering sympathy, empathy, support and advice.

The role of the FLO involves the day to day management of the relationship with the family in the investigation and close liaison with the SIO to ensure that families are treated appropriately, professionally and with respect to their needs. It may involve working in a variety of situations in very demanding and stressful conditions over sustained periods of time.

4.2 Force Family Liaison Co-ordinator (Force FLC)

The Force FLC provides an overall management structure for the force cadre of FLC and FLO roles. They also maintain the FLO database. The role is carried out by a senior manager or experienced FLO/FLC who has overall responsibility for the support and administrative functions. The functions of the FLC as outlined in 4.3 may also be fulfilled.

4.3 Family Liaison Co-ordinators (FLC)

The main purpose of the FLC is to manage the deployment of FLOs from a strategic and tactical perspective. The FLC will utilise the FLO database and ensure officers attend regular clinical supervision appointments with Occupational Health. The FLC will provide support for Senior Investigating Officers (SIO) and Senior Identification Managers (SIM), including assisting with the preparation and completion of the FLO strategy and FLO risk assessment and regularly liaise with managers regarding

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staff deployed in an FLO capacity. Specific account and reference is to be made in respect of officers within any protected characteristic group where a potential risk is identified or adjustments need to be made or at least considered to address the needs attributable to any protected characteristic (EQIA).

4.4 Senior Investigating Officer (SIO)

The purpose of the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) is to determine the Family Liaison Strategy, taking into account the identification of the family, selection and appointment of FLOs in liaison with the Force FLC, if absent any other trained FLC. The SIO is responsible for supporting and supervising the FLOs, strategic and tactical management, communication with the family, media issues, indirect communication and long term adjustment strategies. The SIO is accountable for the completion of a risk assessment in relation to the FLOs deployment and is responsible for the monitoring of the individuals welfare whilst working for the investigation. This must therefore account for officers Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) needs.

5. Selection Procedure

Two distinct selection processes govern employment in the FLO role. The first of these relates to the overall selection criteria for training and the second relates to deployment of a FLO in a particular case. Although an officer has been trained and is fully competent, circumstances may dictate that an individual's deployment or retention in the role with a particular family is inappropriate e.g. EQIA, specialist skills and current capacity.

5.1 Selection Criteria

Candidates should have the following personal qualities:

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- Good communication and listening skills
- Be confident and self assured
- The ability to manage their stress and identify signals to raise concerns and seek support
- The ability to work with minimal supervision
- Be flexible and non-judgemental
- Be able to accurately record information

There is an onus on the FLO to inform the SIO/SIM or FLC of any factors that they are aware of that makes their deployment or continued retention inappropriate, for example, if they have suffered a significant loss in the past eighteen month period, have recently undergone a major life trauma or any other EQIA issues.

New to Role

Consideration must be given regarding the suitability of officers to be trained to work with the family. Officers should be volunteers having a clear and reasoned motive reflecting genuine commitment for wishing to train and operate as a FLO.

- A serious crime FLO must be competent at PIP Level 2 – (be CID/ICIDP trained) and be completing an FLO foundation course
- For deployment to Traffic Incidents the FLO must be PIP 1 level trained and on the FLO Foundation Course
- PIP Levels will not be taken into account for FLO deployment to a mass fatality disaster. The FLO will be drawn from a specific DVI cadre.

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Evidence of the ongoing competence of a FLO should be included in the officer's annual eDR records and in conjunction with their FLO profile held by Force FLC/Dept FLCs and individual FLO.

6. Deployment

6.1 How to Deploy an FLO

The responsibility for selection and deployment of an FLO will lie with the FLC and SIO. The decision will be based on the criteria as outlined by the SIO as well as:

- Availability
- Current workloads
- Specialist knowledge and experience
- Previous deployment history
- Suitability for the specific deployment
- EQIA considerations due to any protected characteristics

It is acknowledged that there may be some occasions where deployment is urgent. However it is usual for the deployment of a FLO following a proper briefing, the agreement of a strategy and the completion of a risk assessment. Effective practice indicates that a death messages should be delivered by an FLO. If this is not possible then an FLO should be deployed as soon as practicable (2.1 page 67 NPJA guidance)

6.2 Deployment Procedure for Category A¹, B² and C³ incidents and any other deployments

1. Once the need for the deployment of an FLO has been identified by the SIO, the FCID FLC will be contacted and given a summary of the incident and details of the identified family.
2. The SIO in liaison with the FCID FLC (if unavailable then the team FLC) will identify a suitable Primary FLO from the appropriate Major Investigation Review Team (MIRT) in the first instance. If none are available from the MIRT then they will be selected from other FCID teams as appropriate. This will always be done in consultation with departmental supervisors.
3. The FLC in liaison with the SIO will identify a suitable Deputy FLO. The Deputy FLO will be expected to assist the Primary FLO during specific stages of the operation. The deputy FLO will not necessarily be from the same department, and may be drawn from elsewhere. Fulfilling the role of deputy FLO the FLC and SIO/SIM by consider the deployment of newly trained officers, to enable them to gain experience and development.
4. Once selected the FLO and deputy will be contacted by the Force FLC or the investigative team. They will be briefed as to the operation, strategy and risk assessment.

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¹ Definition – Cat A - A homicide or other major investigation which is of grave concern or where vulnerable members of the public are at risk, and where the identity of the offender(s) is not apparent or the investigation and securing evidence requires significant resource allocation.

² Definition - Cat B – A homicide or other major investigation where the identity of the offender(s) is not apparent, the continued risk to the public is low and the investigation or securing evidence can be achieved within normal force resourcing arrangements.

³ Definition of Cat C incident - A homicide or other major investigation where the identity of the offender(s) is apparent from the outset and the investigation and/or securing evidence can be achieved easily.

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6.3 Other Deployments

A family liaison officer can be appointed in operations outside of homicide investigations. These could include SUDI, death of a vulnerable adult in a care setting or a missing person investigation. However this list is not exhaustive and this policy does not seek to identify all situations where the deployment of an FLO and deputy will be needed.

From the outset some of these incidents will be Cat A, Cat B or Cat C incidents. Where this is the case deployment will mirror the advice given in paragraphs 6.2. However it should be noted that not all deaths that fall within these categories will require the deployment of an FLO and deputy. Each deployment should be considered on its own merits. Nothing in this policy prevents the police from maintaining contact with a family and ensuring that they are provided with up to date information about any incident or investigation

When considering the deployment of an FLO the SIO should consider a number of factors. These might include the following, but other considerations dependent on the operation, will also become a factor.

- Gathering material from the family in a manner which contributes to the investigation and preserves its integrity
- Providing information to, and facilitate care and support for, the family, who are themselves victims, in a sensitive and compassionate manner in accordance with the needs of the investigation
- Securing the confidence and trust of the family, thereby enhancing their contribution to the investigation

6.4 Deployment procedure for Rape & Serious Sexual Assault Investigations

The deployment of an STO (Specially Trained Officer) is an option available for all rape and serious sexual assault investigations (refer to West Midlands Police policy on rape and serious sexual assault). The role of the STO in the vast majority of cases is sufficient to provide care and support to the victim throughout the investigation. It is rare that the family of a rape or serious sexual assault victim will require any specific police involvement and as such the deployment of a trained FLO will be required in only a very small number of cases. Examples (these are not exhaustive) of the special circumstances that may require the skills of a FLO to be involved with the family include:

- An offence that has attracted large scale media coverage.
- An offence where the SIO feels it will enhance the investigation

6.5 Emergency FLO Deployment Procedure for mass fatality incidents/ deployment by a National Incident Room

For further information in relation to family liaison in mass fatality incidents refer to [NPIA Family Liaison Officer Guidance 2008 Section 7, page 47](#).

The aim of this guidance is to ensure the most effective investigation possible into the death of an individual in a mass fatality incident, by the immediate implementation of a family liaison strategy. This strategy will include the deployment of an FLO to every family believed to have lost a relative in the incident.

1. Once the need for the emergency deployment of an FLO has been identified following a mass fatality incident, the coordinating National Incident Room (NIR) may request that local FLOs are deployed to bereaved families residing within the Force area. In such cases the Force FLC will become the single point of contact for the West Midlands Police area

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- II. The Force FLC, or if necessary other FLCs, will be contacted by the Force Communications Centre (FCC) who have access on their shared folder to the FLO deployment list updated monthly by the Force FLC and published on the FLO website.
- III. With direction from the Force FLC, the FLCs will then identify suitably trained FLOs to perform the FLO roles within the mass fatality incident using the separate cadre of suitably trained officers in Disaster Victim Identification (DVI)
- IV. In the absence of the Force FLC and deputy the FCC can contact any FLC from the list available on the intranet Family Liaison website. They will have access to the database of FLOs and deploy accordingly as long as the Force FLC is notified at some stage post deployment.
- V. The essential requirements for the deployed of an FLO are:
 - Fully Trained
 - Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) Trained
 - Have no other concurrent FLO deployments
 - Conform to welfare procedures
 - EQIA Considerations

6.6 General Rules for FLO Deployment

FLOs must always be deployed in pairs. (If not possible as soon as practicable and risk assessed in SIO policy). One of the FLOs should take the lead role with the family while the other should remain fully up to date on the progress of the contact. The deployment of FLOs in pairs has benefits for the family and the investigation as the role can continue at times when the lead FLO is unavailable. It also has the benefit of providing greater support in respect of developing a strategy and managing stress. The FLO should be trained to national standards (any variation to this criterion must be recorded in the policy file and accompanied by an appropriate risk assessment).

All FLOs will be provided with a mobile phone and vehicle to carry out the role. This is essential, if not implemented then a full policy decision needs to be completed by the SIO for the reasons and risk assessed.

An FLO should be deployed at the earliest possible moment after a risk assessment has been conducted.

It is essential that an FLO is initially, if not exclusively, dedicated to the task. To perform their function effectively they must be an integral part of the enquiry team, and included in all briefings and de-briefings.

When considering which FLOs are deployed, the SIO/SIM/FLC should take account of the individual FLO and their ability to perform the function effectively, at that time. The following matters should be taken into account when selecting a FLO:

- Whether they have suffered a recent bereavement of a close relative or partner or other major life trauma
- Current workload
- Frequency of recent deployment in that role
- Previous experience in that role
- Availability
- Previous contact and relationship with the victim's family

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- Previous compliance with the mandatory requirement to attend counselling support
- Whether the FLO lives or usually works near the family's residence

6.7 The needs of the family

In cases where a split family is identified, or there are complex dynamics affecting the family group, the SIO/SIM/FLC should consider the deployment of an additional FLO as appropriate. In cases where more than one FLO is deployed, care must be taken to ensure the accurate co-ordination of the information flow to the family.

Other factors which may impact on FLO deployment:

- Gender may be a critical factor both for cultural or other reasons.
- Where the victim is from a minority group, particular lifestyle diversity or hard to reach or hard to hear group
- Its scale, in nature and complexity
- The community impact assessment completed for the incident
- The media interest that it is likely to attract
- Risk assessment
- Where there is direct involvement of a solicitor or community organisation acting on behalf of, or as a conduit of communication for the family in such a manner that direct contact with the family is limited
- There is a hate crime element within the homicide
- An officer with specialist skills or quality may be required

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The SIO may deem it appropriate to deploy a FLO to an incident that falls outside core family liaison business. Special care should be taken in these circumstances to make sure that the officer has had sufficient training to undertake the role and a full risk assessment is carried out prior to deployment. Where the deployment of an FLO takes place outside the scope of this guidance, the SIO/SIM is expected to detail the decision making process within their policy file

6.8 Action on Appointment

On appointment the SIO will discuss the strategy for working with the victim's family with the FLO. The level of involvement by the FLO and specific tasks allocated during the investigation will be governed by this strategy. It is essential that the FLO establish the parameters of their role at this stage of the enquiry. The FLO must be clear about the objectives they are seeking to meet in accordance with the SIO strategy. The FLO has a duty to raise any EQIA awareness or risks at this time or any point after with regards to themselves or appointed family members.

The FLO will meet the family as soon as possible. Before meeting the family the FLO will obtain a copy of the strategy and risk assessment. And complete an electronic FLODEX Deployment and Exit Form which will be e-mailed to the Force FLC within 24 hours.

6.9 Risk Assessments

West Midlands Police has a statutory obligation for the Health and Safety of its staff and will ensure that:

- An FLO is a volunteer with operational experience who has knowledge of the potential risks associated with modern policing.
- The Force has an appropriate selection procedure designed to evaluate the suitability of each officer for the role.
- Officers selected receive the recommended training prior to deployment to enhance knowledge and awareness regarded as essential for FLOs.
- Whilst performing the role, officers have access to support and counselling.
- Officers in the role have clear lines of communication with the FLC and SIO receiving regular briefings and de-briefings where they can raise any concerns or issues.
- The SIO in conjunction with the FLC is able to monitor the work of the FLO ensuring that tasks set fall within the overall aim and objectives of the liaison and that the role is performed within the parameters of clear and concise written guidelines.
- A risk assessment is undertaken prior to the deployment of a FLO and continuously reviewed in accordance with these recommendations.

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Family Liaison risk assessments are a careful and systematic examination of the work activities of those undertaking family liaison duties. The responsibility for ensuring that risk assessments are conducted rests with the SIO in conjunction with the FLC both of whom have a duty of care in respect of officers performing this role.

In addition, there is a requirement to record in writing the significant findings of the risk assessment and to review the assessment when there is a reason to suspect that it is no longer valid or circumstances have changed.

The risk assessment forms must include:

- The circumstances that could give rise to harm
- The possibility of harm occurring
- The severity of the harm
- Who could be harmed
- What measures could be implemented to prevent or reduce the possibility of harm
- EQIA considerations

In circumstances where it is judged too dangerous for an FLO to enter an address, the SIO will look at other options such as a meeting at a safe location, to use only telephone contacts or to employ other family members as intermediaries. Copies of risk assessment forms and instructions for completion can be found on the [Family Liaison Website](#).

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6.10 Identifying the family

The term “family” should include partners, parents, siblings, children, guardians and others who have had a direct and close relationship with the victim. The SIO/SIM must take into account the possible dynamics of a family’s structure to ensure that an appropriate level of support is offered. This is particularly important in situations where the family is extended, split in some way or involves the victim’s association with a particular cultural or lifestyle diversity e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) community or a religious choice or any other group within EDHR.

In identifying the family and prior to meeting them, the SIO/SIM should establish as much information concerning the family as possible. This will include determining any possible cultural or lifestyle considerations such as age, disability, gender realignment, race, religion, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity. Then ensure the FLO has sufficient knowledge and understanding regarding any specific diversity issues. Any information and intelligence will be gathered to ascertain if anything is known about the victim or the family which may have a bearing on the conduct of the investigation and the development of the Family Liaison Strategy.

Further information regarding EQIA or EDHR and be found on the intranet on the EDHR Hub of Excellence.

7. Cross Border Deployment

7.1 Regional and National deployments

There are likely to be occasions where cross border co-operation will be necessary when deploying a FLO. For example, where a homicide occurs within one force, but the victim’s family are located in another force. The location of the intended deployment in relation to the force boundary should be considered. There will be occasions when it is more appropriate to seek support from the force where the family reside, to deploy a FLO on our behalf.

The FLO, in consultation with the SIO, should consider the best method of successful liaison with the family. If it is decided to deploy a West Midlands FLO into another force area then the FCID Senior Management Team must be informed of the intended deployment. Welfare of the deployed FLO will remain the responsibility of the SIO, FLC and Force FLC. Commanders and an FLC must be consulted when deploying an FLO away from their normal place of duty.

7.2 Review of deployments

In cases where an FLO is deployed following a Category A or B murder the Force FLC will participate in the 42 day review process. The purpose of the review will be to examine the deployment criteria, the FLO strategy, and the relationship with the families. The review might also facilitate the identification of best practice, resource demands and organisational needs. Following the review the Force FLC will write a formal review document where recommendations will be made concerning the ongoing deployment.

7.3 Suspect(s) within the family

When a suspect is potentially within the family group consideration must be given to the deployment of the FLO. The rationale and strategy around this deployment should be recorded and placed on HOLMES. Furthermore a risk assessment should be completed to support the decision making process. The advice of the FLC should be sought in developing a strategy concerning such deployments.

The following issues should be taken into consideration:

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- That an FLO is an overt investigator
- Enhanced monitoring of the work and interaction with the family
- The level of information disclosure to the FLO and, in turn, the family
- How any intelligence that arises from contact between the family and the FLO is to be managed
- In view of the potential for intelligence and evidence gathering, the need for the FLO to be clear concerning his or her interaction with the family in respect of the requirements of:
 - The Police and Criminal Evidence ACT, 1984 (PACE)
 - Disclosure
 - Human rights
 - The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)
 - EQIA
 - Data Protection Act 1998
- The importance of fully documenting all contact and interactions with the family
- The SIO and FLC to consider the deployment of a new pair of FLOs when a suspect is arrested
- Investigative and/or evidential impact of deployment

An FLO must never be used in any other role that could undermine the family's confidence in them. Care must be taken to ensure that the FLO does not stray into the area of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) under RIPA, whether qualified to do so or not, when dealing with the families.

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7.4. Defendants Family

In appropriate cases SIO/SIM may consider deploying a contact officer to a defendant's family, or asking another appropriate person to represent the family in order to act as a conduit of communication between the family and the investigation team.

In cases where the victim and the suspect come from the same family, consideration can be given to deploying an FLO if investigative opportunities are identified and are compatible with the FLO role.

8 FLO STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

8.1 Deployment and Exit Form (FLODEX)

At the beginning of a deployment the FLO will complete the electronic FLO Deployment and Exit Form (FLODEX) which can be found in standard forms – [WP 740](#) and will e-mail this to the FLC and Force FLC within 1 day of being deployed. This will provide the Force FLC with an audit trail of each FLO deployment across the Force. Any EQIA issues should be raised on this form.

8.2 Record Keeping

At the beginning of an inquiry the FLO will be provided with a National ACPO Family Liaison Log. This log will be maintained by the FLO and supervised at regular intervals by the SIO/Deputy SIO and SPOC and registered on HOLMES2.

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Where HOLMES2 is not used, the documents will be recorded and maintained within the administrative system utilised by the investigation team.

Record keeping is essential to the role of family liaison. It provides the facility for the SIO to manage the liaison effectively and ensures an accurate and transparent record for any future review or legal process.

The log will be maintained in line with force instructions relating to original notes and care will be employed in their completion, taking into account the possibility of future disclosure. It is also important to retain any other means used to record information relating to contacts such as notebooks to ensure evidential integrity and to meet the requirements of the Criminal Procedures and Investigation Act 1996.

Where the FLO suspects a member of the family of being involved in the offence, they will immediately bring it to the attention of the SIO, being mindful of the implications of Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 in such circumstances.

The following information should be recorded in the FLO Log:

- Details of all strategic and tactical decisions agreed with the SIO relating to the family liaison strategy
- Date and time of all contacts made including the times of any meetings
- A family tree depicting the structure of the family unit
- Method of contact and venue where applicable
- Detail the purpose of contact and any information exchanged
- Details of any complaint made by the family and action taken to appraise the SIO
- Details of any request made by the family not acceded to and action taken to appraise the SIO
- Details of who initiated the contact e.g. police, family, others
- Details of non-family members present at meetings
- All unsuccessful attempts to contact the family or their representatives
- All attempts to contact the family that were refused or declined and any reasons given
- Date and time of submission of information to HOLMES2 or other administrative systems
- Recording and grading of communication between Police and family
- EQIA considered for the family members with protected characteristics, what is in place or needs to be in place to accommodate any individual needs.

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Within the Log, the FLO should grade the quality of the communication between them and the family on an ongoing basis using the numerical scale set out in the Log. This scale runs from 1 to 3 as follows:

1. The Police/family relationship is stable with no ongoing or anticipated problems
2. The Police/family relationship is or is anticipated to give cause for concern
3. The Police/family relationship is consistently unstable or non-existent and may require the involvement of an intermediary and/or crisis intervention

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The FLO must keep the SIO appraised throughout, particularly if the quality of the communication with the family deteriorates from either or both perspectives.

In the event level 2 or 3 are obtained then the Force FLC should be notified and appraised of the situation

8.3 Working and communicating with the family

The conduct of the first contact with the family is vital in laying the foundations for a successful partnership. At no time will a family be deliberately misled; contact will be honest and as far as possible open. It is of paramount importance that families are treated appropriately, professionally, with respect and with consideration given to their needs. Officers will never make assumptions as to the particular needs and expectations of a family but will respond to those that are communicated by them taking into account EDHR (*Refer to NPIA guidance 5.7 page 35*).

During the initial contact with the family and in any event during the early stages of the inquiry, the FLO will draw the family's attention to, and confirm their understanding of, the conduct of a police investigation and the role of the FLO.

The FLO will provide the family with the leaflet "Family Liaison Officers – Who We Are and What We Do."

The FLO will have a number of issues that will require addressing with the family in the early stages:

- Providing immediate appropriate information to the family concerning the death of the victim and explaining to the family what happens now in respect of the body
- The FLO will establish early liaison with the Coroner's Officer and remain in regular contact. The FLO will introduce the Coroner's Officer to the family at the earliest opportunity. The Coroners Officer will be an additional point of contact for the family, in relation to queries regarding the viewing, identification, release of the body and retention of body parts
- Establishing from family members any immediate evidence, information or rumours they may be aware of, so that it can be passed directly to the SIO without delay
- Giving or facilitating initial practical support for members of the family
- As far as is possible protect the family from unwarranted media intrusions
- Facilitating the family's wishes to visit the scene where it is divorced from the family home. There is a need to balance evidence gathering with the emotional needs of the family
- Arranging access to medical services for the family (e.g. family members suffering the effects of trauma) if they wish
- Establishing whether the family have any specific requirements in relation to age, disability, sex, gender realignment, race, religion, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity
- In particular cases it may be appropriate to explore with the family, at an early stage, the involvement of statutory or voluntary local support organisations, including local community interest groups

Where relevant, the FLO will be fully conversant with the contents of the Home Office packs 'Information for Families of Homicide Victims' and 'Advice for bereaved families and friends following a death on the road.'

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8.4 Indirect Communication

Occasionally direct dialogue with the family and the Police may break down. The SIO will look to families to be part of an effective investigation, it is much harder to support, protect and work with a family at arm's length. Anything short of direct dialogue with the family has the potential to impair intelligence flows, weaken the investigation and undermine confidence.

The onus is therefore on the SIO, in conjunction with the FLOs, to overcome any barriers or difficulties. If these cannot be overcome directly, or constructive progress be made towards this goal, the SIO will look to other members of the Police Service who may be able to assist. These might include officers responsible for community liaison, local LPU officers other force departments or outside agencies.

8.5 Victimology

In the aftermath of any homicide one of the highest priority actions is to gather victimology or lifestyle information about the victim.

This is generally done by tasking the FLO at an early stage (fast track actions) these should be fed back into the room in a way agreed by the SIO. These should be cross referenced to the FLO Log. A copy of the Log should also be submitted to the incident room.

This information is gathered from those that have been identified as being close to the victim. Usually this is the family of the deceased, but on occasion inquiries can reveal that those close to the victim were friends and associates that have to be identified through sensitive but thorough investigation.

8.6 Viewing, Identification and Release of the Body

It will be recognised that the formal identification procedure and viewing of the body are separate processes. The identification process is the statutory responsibility of the Coroner. It is essential that the FLO regularly liaises with the coroner's officer relating to any issues concerning the viewing of the body. FLOs will only pass on information about these processes after appropriate consultation with the Coroners Officer and SIO.

Appointments to view the body must be made through the coroner's officers. The FLO must not make assumptions on behalf of the family or pass comment on whether it is advisable to view the body or not. Sensitive and responsive management of viewings can be critical to the family's grieving process and could help, over time, them to come to terms with the death. It is advisable for the FLO to view the body at an early stage to assist the families in their decision whether or not to view the body.

After the post-mortem the FLO should establish which tissues and /or organs have been retained for further pathological examination. They must also ascertain the reasons for their retention. This will be recorded in the 'removal of bodily organs/tissues' book WG 429 (Blue Book). The FLO needs to be prepared to discuss these issues with the family, after consultation with the SIO/SIM and the coroner's officer. (Refer to Humans Tissues Act)

The FLO should research and gain awareness of any EQIA issues around burial and religious needs of the family. It is essential, and the responsibility of the SIO and FLO, to ensure that they are aware of the demands that might be placed upon them by the family of the victim concerning funeral practice. These demands must be balanced out with the need to properly and thoroughly investigate any crime or incident.

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8.7 Disclosure of information to the family

It may not be possible to disclose all information to a family. Especially where the suspect(s) is not immediately traced or is potentially within the family group. The FLO and SIO should be mindful that in certain circumstances the disclosure of information might jeopardise the Police investigation and subsequent prosecution. This is particularly relevant when suspects have been arrested and charged and sub-judice rules are in effect. If situations such as this arise then the FLO should consult with the SIO who might, where appropriate consult with the Crown Prosecution Service.

Family members are potentially significant witnesses and there is a need from the outset to exercise extreme care in the information that is shared with them. At any later trial there is a danger that allegations could be made that the information shared by the FLO contaminated the family member's evidence. It is therefore important that the FLO records what is said in the FLO log and seeks the guidance of the SIO/SIM.

The FLO must fully explain the possible effects of information disclosure to the family, particularly how information is sub-judice once a suspect has been charged.

The FLO should explain fully the possible effects of information disclosure to the family particularly the transition that occurs following the charge of suspect(s).

8.8 Identification

Code D 2.2 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 states that no officer involved with the investigation of the case against the suspect may take part in these procedures. This includes warning witnesses to attend an identification procedure and conveying witnesses to an identification parade. The FLO must not, therefore, warn or accompany any family member to any identification parade as this may jeopardise the conduct of the parade. This should be fully explained to the family.

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Identification parades in which victims' families are involved may be a significantly traumatic occasion and the first time that they have come into contact with the suspected perpetrators. The FLO must discuss with SIO/SIM the possibility of deploying another FLO who is independent of the investigation to guide and support the family members through this process.

The FLO who is not a member of the enquiry team should take time to explain the generic process of the identification parade to prepare family members for this experience.

8.9 Return of property

The family of a victim might be very insistent that the property that belonged to them is returned quickly following the incident or death. However before any property is returned a number of considerations should be made. The following issues should be considered prior to returning property to the family:

- What property does the family wish to be returned
- How do they want the property returned, e.g. cleaned in boxes
- Need there be a long delay in any return of property

Property to be restored should be inspected to ensure that:

- Any police or court exhibit tags have been removed
- Any clothing has been cleaned and pressed when required to do so

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- Any jewellery or other personal effects should be cleaned and properly presented prior to return unless a request is made to be return in the condition in which found
- Any religious items to be treated according to families requests if possible to do so

The family's views must always be established before any property is cleaned. The FLO should liaise closely with the exhibits officer on all matters pertaining to the exhibits. It is essential the property is returned rather than collected as this may cause upset and trauma.

Health and safety issues must always be taken into account whenever property is searched and/or cleaned.

Specialist companies may be used to provide logistical support in respect of the matters referred to in this section, particularly in instances of mass fatalities.

9 Supporting Agencies

Police Officers are not in a position to provide full practical support and guidance when working with victims' families. The FLO may find that the family requires support and assistance with a variety of issues. There are a number of agencies that can provide assistance at national and local levels. The nature of the support that families require varies considerably, depending on their individual needs and they will be fully involved in the decision making process.

An FLO website⁴ has been created to provide FLOs with relevant literature to assist them with their role, this includes access to:

- External Agencies i.e. details for BRAKE, SAMM, CRUSE, CBT
- Road Policing Manual
- Murder Investigation Manual
- McPherson Report

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9.1 National Homicide Service

In April 2010, the National Homicide Service was launched. This is a mandatory service, introduced by the government in response to a report written by Sarah Payne, the Victims Champion. It aims to provide a service to victims and families of the following crimes; Murder, Manslaughter and Infanticide.

FLOs are required to make contact with regional caseworkers within 72 hours of an incident occurring and pass on their contact details, SIO contact details, Operational Name, Date investigation commenced. This can be done via email or phone. Details are on intranet FLO site.

Once this initial contact has been made by the FLO, the caseworker will then contact the FLO within 48 hours to arrange a case conference. Once relevant information has been passed onto the caseworker, including any EDHR/EQIA issues, the FLO together with the SIO and caseworker will arrange a suitable time for the caseworker to be introduced to the family.

The caseworker is a professional who will aim to provide the family with various services including emotional support. They will be able to provide them access to agencies that may be of assistance to them.

⁴ Web -

http://intranet2/hq_departments/crime_support/major_investigation_unit/family_liaison.aspx

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9.2 Post Conviction Contact

The family will be made aware that within two months of an offender being sentenced the Probation Service will make contact with the family. Where possible the FLO should be present at the first contact and brief the probation service of any EQIA factors. The purpose of making contact is twofold.

- To provide information to the family about the custodial process.
- To obtain information from the family about any concerns they may have or wish to be taken into account when the conditions (but not the date) of release are being considered.

There is also an obligation on the Probation Service to contact the family at key stages, e.g. when release on licence is being contemplated.

9.3 The Media

In reporting events concerning a sudden, unexplained or violent death, the media's representation of the victim, their persistence and scale of reporting can depend on many factors and speculation surrounding the victim. These might include the victim's age, gender, race (as defined in the Race relations Act 1976, section 3), religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability, allegations about their lifestyle, notoriety and the circumstances surrounding their death. All of these factors may be surmised and inaccurately reported. Similar factors concerning the alleged perpetrators might be reported and weighed up against the victim and also be speculative and inaccurate. The persistence of the media to obtain a story or information may involve repeated calls on family homes and canvassing of friends, acquaintances and neighbours.

Such factors may exacerbate the trauma of family members, who should be prepared for such media interest. The FLO should advise families when such activity is likely. They should ensure that they are aware of media reporting of the case by liaising closely, on a daily basis, with the appointed press officer. They should then be prepared for any questions that might be raised by families.

It is likely that the press will want a photograph of the victim. The FLO should consult the family and, with their agreement, obtain an approved, recent photograph, which is a good likeness (if possible), for potential publication.

Photographs may only be given to representatives of the press following consultation with the SIO/SIM and appointed press officer, and on condition that the press do not approach the family directly.

In delivering the SIO/SIM media strategy, the FLO should:

- Establish the family's views on participation in the police media strategy and any associated appeals
- In appropriate cases identified by the SIO/SIM, explore the prospect of formulating a family media strategy
- Constantly appraise the SIO/SIM of media activity around the family
- Inform the family of the police media strategy, and pass copies of all police press statements to the family before publication

The FLO must not issue any statements to the media unless specifically requested to do so by the SIO/SIM who should liaise with the appointed press officer.

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9.4 FLO Welfare and care

An FLO is extremely valuable to the force. Their own welfare is paramount to their performance in the role and every effort should be made to ensure their physical and psychological well being.

The SIO and FLC have an obligation to support and constantly monitor the health and welfare of the FLO. They should in particular be aware of the dangers of undue stress levels that can be experienced by the FLO who is exposed to the raw emotions and needs of the bereaved. They must not be left feeling abandoned or isolated. In discharging this obligation the SIO should consider the following:

- The roles and lines of responsibility for the management of FLOs should be clearly set out and recorded within the policy file
- There must be direct communication between the SIO and FLO in connection with their role and issues concerning the family
- It will be the responsibility of the SIO in conjunction with the FLC to monitor welfare of deployed FLOs.
- The FLC will keep up to date the profiles of an FLO supervised by them.
- Interventions and immediate action will be taken when welfare issues are identified and where appropriate, referrals made to Occupational Health
- The SIO and FLC should ensure that an FLO is ideally only deployed in the role on one active enquiry at a time.
- The SIO should confirm that the FLO has exited from families involved in other cases prior to their deployment in a new investigation.
- When required the Force FLC will provide advice and guidance to assist with any deployment decisions

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Responsibility does not lie with the SIO alone and the FLO will be expected to share and take responsibility to ensure that:

- The SIO is fully aware of both family and FLO personal needs
- The SIO is fully aware of planned visits and activity
- Risk assessments have been completed prior to initial deployment to any address
- Regular briefing and debriefing sessions are attended
- Raise any EQIA issues

The FLO is under an obligation to inform the SIO and the FLC of any concerns they have in continuing to perform in a specific case or in any future role as FLO.

9.5 Exit Strategy

When deployed the FLO must remain focused on their primary role as an investigator throughout the investigation. Where the FLO has developed a good relationship with the family, there is potential for the family to become over reliant on the FLO and the FLO becoming over reliant on the family. The implications of this could have a long term detrimental effect on both the family and the FLO. Exit strategies must be well timed, caring and considerate when implemented. A personal visit by the FLO, accompanied by the SIO/SIM to explain the procedure would be appropriate. The National Homicide Service should also be considered during the exit strategy. By introducing the family to the caseworker at an early stage the FLO will find the exiting process from the family can be made easier.

A successful interaction with a family will mean that the FLO has achieved the objectives set by the SIO/SIM. In cases where it is necessary to maintain contact

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with a family over a long period of time, it would be ideal to hand over the family to the National Homicide Service. If this is considered then it must be done in conjunction with the SIO/SIM.

An FLO or another nominated officer should be available for the family where they have particular concerns about the investigation, but any welfare issues must be passed on to a suitable welfare agency or support organisation for them to assist.

Once exited the FLO will complete the second half of the FLODEX Form and e-mail it to the Force FLC. It is the FLOs responsibility to ensure that this is done.

The Force FLC will then liaise with the FLO and any deputy and arrange a formal debrief. The objective of this process is to ensure that any organisational or personal development points are formally captured. Developing this debrief will be the responsibility of the Force FLC.

9.6 Clinical Supervision

Occupational Health will provide the Force FLC with a list of available dates dedicated to FLO Clinical Supervision appointments which will cover the whole year. A blank appointment sheet will be placed on the FLC Shared folder by the Force FLC weeks prior to the actual supervision day. Appointments can then be manually filled in by any of the FLCs for the chosen time/date. When all the appointments have been taken, the Force FLC will e-mail the appointment sheet to the relevant Counselling Officer. If there are any spare appointments, all FLCs across the Force will be e-mailed to highlight and subsequently fill the vacant appointments.

Deployed FLOs will have mandatory group sessions with Occupational Health, these will come into effect once deployed and will continue in six monthly intervals. Non-Deployed FLOs will not have regular sessions, but will be given an occupational health input on their FLO Refresher Courses which will be 12 to 18 month intervals. If non-deployed officers need to be deployed during a mass disaster, it is vital that a GHQ questionnaire is completed by the FLO and assessed by an FLC.

Occupational Health will arrange separate clinical supervision appointments for individual FLOs in exceptional or emergency situations. This will be at the direction of the SIO, Force FLC or FLC.

Occupational Health will then notify the Force FLC of any cancellations or FLOs that do not attend the appointment.

It will be the responsibility of the FLC and individual FLOs to ensure they attend the allocated appointments.

Failure to attend the meetings or repeated cancellations will result in the FLO being removed from the deployment database and having their current deployments reviewed.

A record of all meetings with the Counselling Officers will be maintained. The record will contain the date of the meeting, the reason for the meeting and details of any agreed actions. This record will be available to the FLC or SIO on request. Any other information kept by the Counselling Officer in support of the agreed actions will remain confidential unless the FLO gives approval. A Code of Ethics that requires confidentiality to be maintained, unless the person is a danger to themselves or others, binds counselling officers and FLO's.

It may be necessary, following negotiation and agreement with the FLO, for information to be disclosed to the SIO. This will be done where it is considered that continued deployment might compromise an investigation, the force or adversely affect the welfare of the FLO.

The Force FLC will maintain a central register for FLOs that will include details of all FLO deployments and meetings with Occupational Health.

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The Force FLC will monitor and review this process in conjunction with Occupational Health and FLOs to ensure compliance by FLOs.

10 FAMILY LIAISON IN POLICE COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS

[See Appendix 2, page 65 of the NPIA Family Liaison Officer Guidance 2008.](#)

11 DEATHS ABROAD

[See Appendix 3, page 73 of the NPIA Family Liaison Officer Guidance 2008.](#)

12 SUDDEN AND UNEXPLAINED DEATH OF AN INFANT (SUDI)

[See Appendix 4, page 83 of the NPIA Family Liaison Officer Guidance 2008.](#)

13 VICTIM FS SCHEME

[See Appendix 5, page 95 of the NPIA Family Liaison Officer Guidance 2008.](#)

14 ADMINISTRATION

14.1 Deployment Database

On completion of their training FLOs will complete a profile that will be used to furnish the force FLO database. The database contains the following information:

- FLO contact details
- Availability
- Predicted abstractions
- Date of Training
- Specialist skills/knowledge/languages
- Religious/cultural background
- Current/Previous deployments
- Special knowledge in diversity
- EQIA issues

A copy of the FLO Profile can be found on WMP Standard Forms – [WP739](#).

The Force FLC maintains the Force FLO database. However FLCs should maintain their own deployment database and ensure the Force FLC is notified of any movements of FLO staff or endings of FLO deployments.

14.2 Clinical Supervision Database

The Force FLC will be responsible for keeping the welfare database up to date, following all clinical supervision appointments. The welfare database is stored within the FLC Shared Folder, accessible by all FLCs and Welfare Officers on a 'read-only' basis.

The database contains the following information:

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- FLO details
- Operation
- Date of appointment
- Details of any person who did not attend (DNA)
- Due dates

14.3 Information Management

Automated and manual information will be strictly controlled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Access will be restricted to, FLC, FLO, SIO, SIM and Duty Officers within the Force Communications Centre. Further restrictions will also be applied in relation to the type and level of access. Access will be controlled and managed by the Force FLC.

The care of those involved in a major emergency or mass disaster is a shared responsibility of all emergency services and Local Authorities. Whilst Family Liaison will remain a Police role, partner agencies should assist with other post incident support such as accommodation, transportation and child care issues.

14.4 Resources

The guiding principle in relation to the deployment of an FLO will be that the most suitable officer for the role should be appointed. Initial deployments should consist of two officers which can be reduced to one as part of the exit strategy under the guidance of the SIO. If circumstances dictate, the FLO will be drawn from the relevant department or from anywhere across the force.

The FLO should be given access to a mobile telephone, provided by the organisation, for use when deployed. It is not recommended that an FLO use their personal mobile telephone when deployed unless in exceptional circumstances.

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15. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EQIA)

The Policy has been reviewed and drafted against all protected characteristics in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty embodied in the Equality Act 2010. The policy has therefore been Equality Impact Assessed to show how WMP has evidenced 'due regard' to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Supporting documentation in the form of an EQIA has been completed and is available for viewing in conjunction with this Policy.

15.1 Diversity Implications

This policy is relevant to the obligations upon the service to:-

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Promote equality
- Promote good relations between people of different groups.
- Considering all aspects of Equality Diversity Human Rights (EDHR) and protected characteristic groups as per below :

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1. Age
2. Disability
3. Sex
4. Gender realignment
5. Race
6. Religion or belief
7. Sex orientation
8. Pregnancy
9. Maternity

Dealing effectively with sudden unexpected tragedy within different religious backgrounds can present particular difficulties. In any such cases, advice can be sought from Coroners, Community Race Relations Officers or the Force Diversity Manager.

16. HUMAN RIGHTS

This policy has been implemented and reviewed in accordance with that set out with the European Convention and principles provided by the Human Rights Act 1998. The application of this policy has no differential impact on any of the articles within the Act. However, failure as to its implementation would impact on the core duties of values of WMP (and its partners), to uphold the law and serve/protect all members of its community (and beyond) from harm.

17.27 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI)

Public disclosure of each policy document is determined by the Force Policy Co-ordinator in agreement with its owner. Version 1.2 of this policy document has been GPMS marked as Not Protectively Marked.

Public disclosure does not automatically apply to supporting Force policies, directives and associated guidance documents, and in all cases the necessary advice should be sought prior to disclosure to any one of these associated documents.

Which exemptions apply and to which section of the document?	Whole document	Section number
N/A		

18. TRAINING

New FLO/FLC courses will be available through Learning and Development, however only when the need arises by the Force.

All FLOs and FLCs will be expected to attend a refresher input every 12 to 18 months which will be through Learning and Development.

19. PROMOTION / DISTRIBUTION & MARKETING

The following methods will be adopted to ensure full knowledge of the Policy:

- Policy document and associated documents on the Force Intranet (noticeboard) for the attention of all WMP officers and staff;
- Recording and audit entry on the Force policy library (EQUIP);
- Intranet marketing via Force Communications on Notice Board

20. REVIEW

The Policy business owner, the Force FLC, will maintain outright ownership of the policy and any other associated documents and in-turn delegate responsibility to the department/unit responsible for its continued monitoring.

The policy should be considered a 'living document' and subject to regular review to reflect upon any Force, Home Office/ACPO, legislative changes, good practice (learning the lessons) both locally and nationally, etc.

A formal review of the Policy document, including that of any other potential impacts i.e. EQIA, will be conducted by the date shown as indicated on the first page.

Any amendments to the Policy will be conducted and evidenced through the Force Policy Co-ordinator and set out within the version control template.

Feedback is always welcomed by that of the author/owner and/or Force Policy Co-ordinator as to the content and layout of the policy document and any potential improvements.

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CHIEF CONSTABLE

21. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Reason for Change	Amended/Agreed by.
V.1.0	Nov 2012	Minor amendments prior to submission to ACC for approval	PS 4566 Brookes
V.1.1	22.1.13	To ACC Cann for approval	PS 4566 Brookes
V.1.2	25.2.13	To CC Sims for authorisation	PS 4566 Brookes
V1.2	03/03/2014	Reviewed by DC Yearsley – No changes – Extended review date	56408 Couchman